**Chapter 5: “Graduation” pp. 72–79**

1. On page 73, Ji-li says, “I kept away from the Red Successors, from the rest of my classmates, from everyone.” Why do you think Ji-li isolates herself? At the same time, she also participates in the isolation of Teacher Gu, a teacher she once admired. (“For nearly a month I had tried to avoid her,” admits Ji-li on page 74.) Why do you think she participates in isolating Teacher Gu? Compare this situation to other examples in your own life, or in other stories where people have been isolated. What is the same? What is different? Is isolation ever an effective or appropriate response to a problem? Why or why not?
2. In this chapter, we learn that the way students are being assigned to schools has changed. Before the Cultural Revolution, students were assigned to schools based on grades and teacher recommendations, with the students with the highest academic achievement being assigned to the most prestigious schools. In the fall of 1966, students are being assigned to schools based on where they live. Which school assignment system do you think is most fair? Why? Many revolutionaries thought it was unfair to assign students to the best schools solely based on grades and teacher recommendations. Why do you think they believed this? What did they think was the relationship between class privilege and academic achievement? Do you think any of their arguments are relevant today?
3. On page 79, Ji-li writes, “I knew that many of my favorite books . . . would be sorted away forever, declared poison under the new standards.” Why do you think that the Chinese authorities in charge of the Cultural Revolution wanted to burn certain books? Leaders throughout history have declared certain books to be dangerous and have taken actions to ban books. What does burning or banning books reveal about a society? What can get a book labeled as dangerous? Is there ever an appropriate time to ban a book? If so, when? German writer Heinrich Heine is famous for saying, “Where they burn books, they will ultimately also burn people.” How does your understanding of history support or refute this statement?